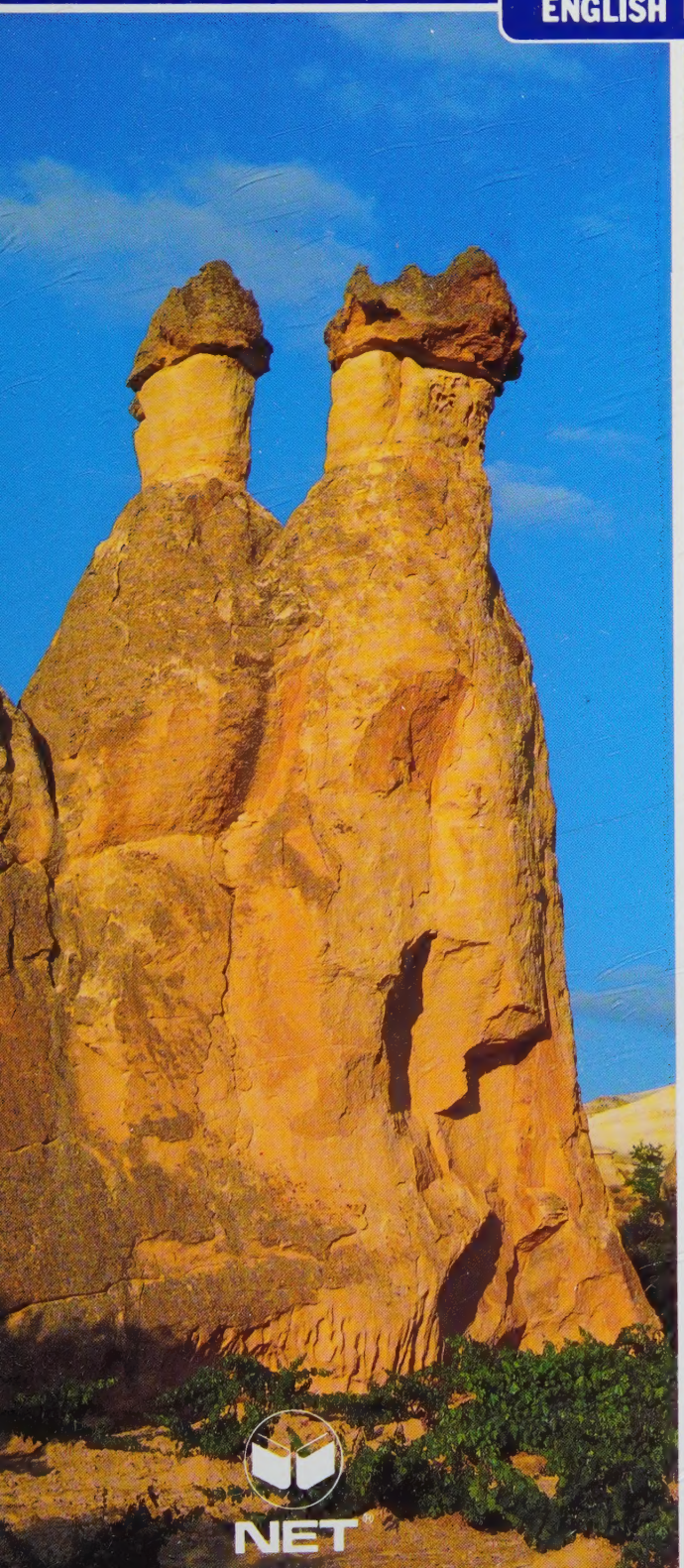
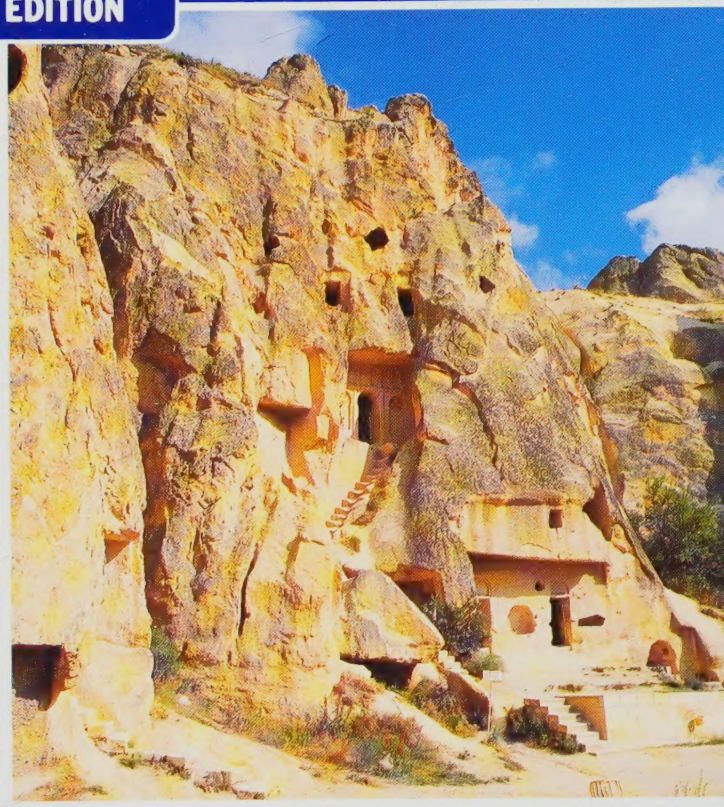
CAPPADOCIA

ENGLISH EDITION





155 COLOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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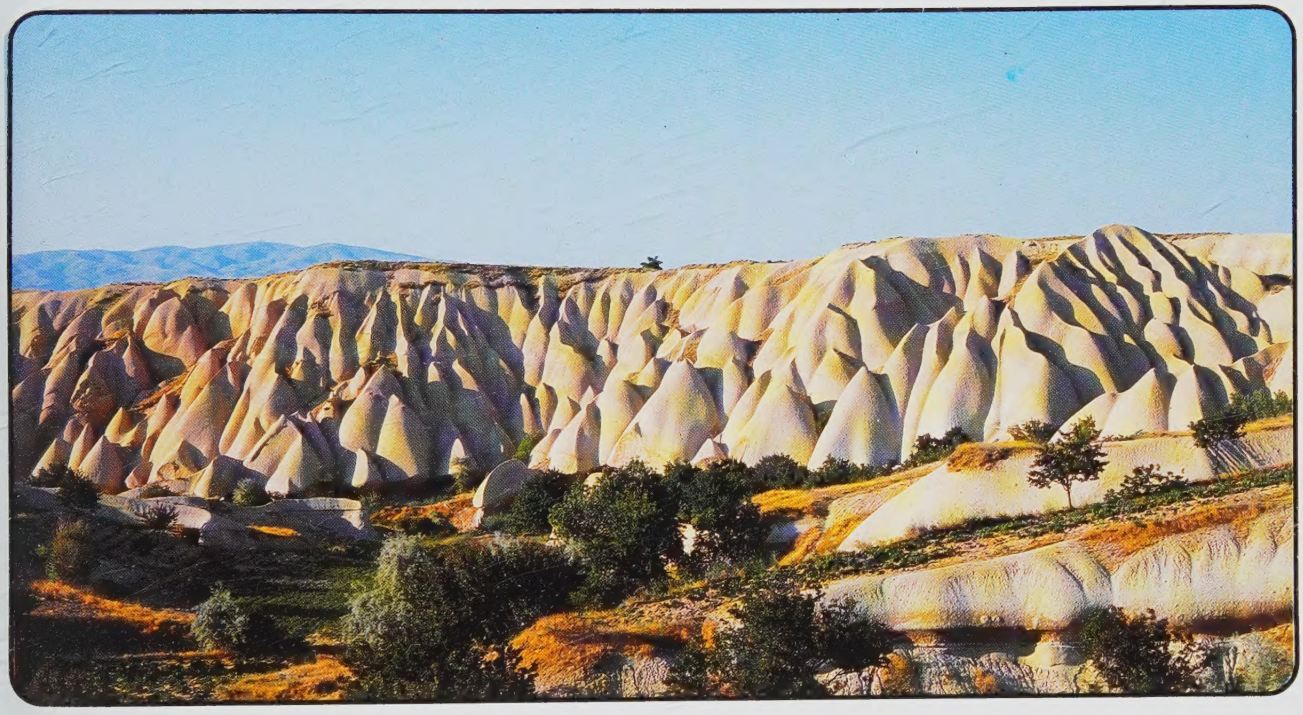

155 Colour illustrations

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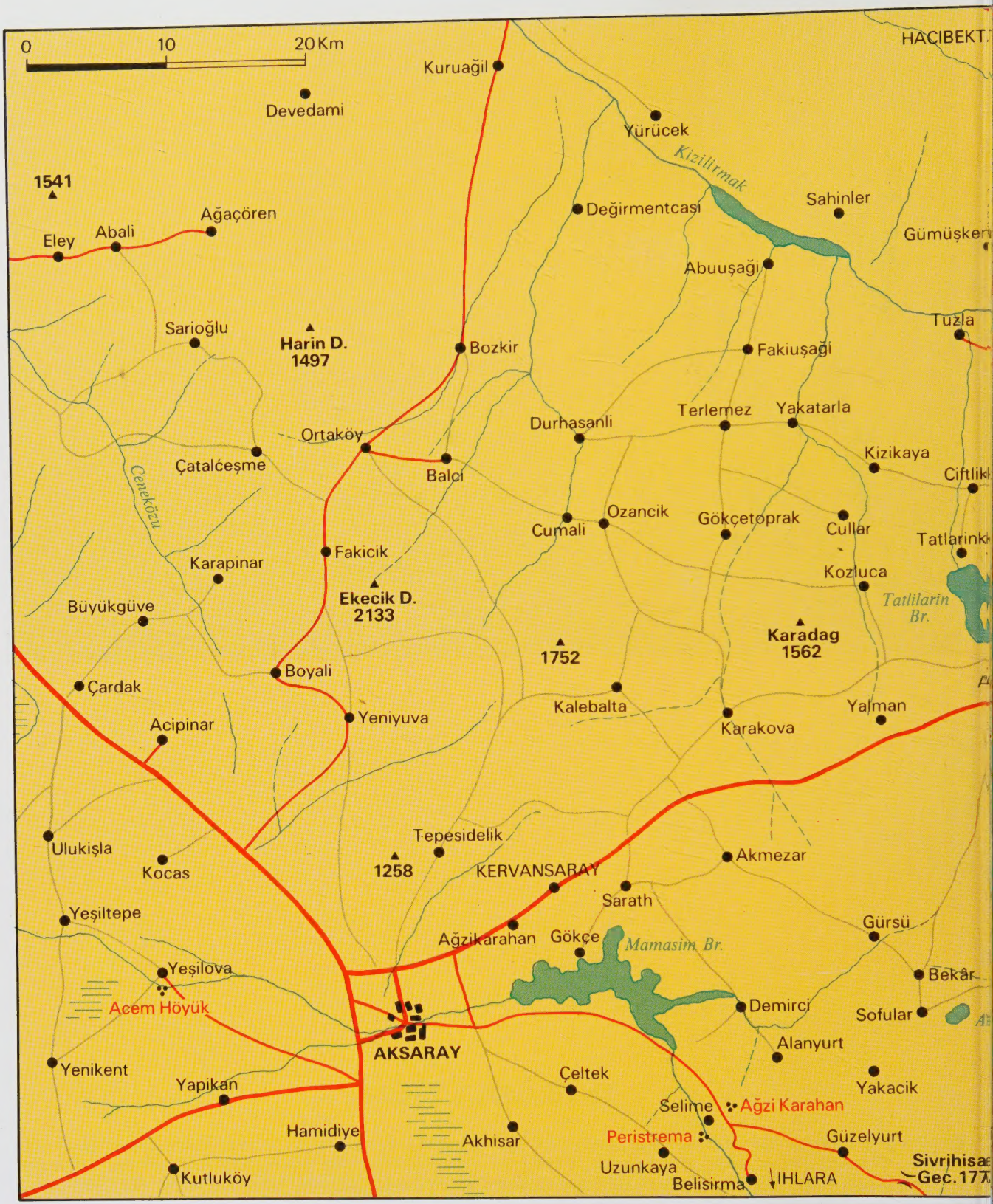
INTRODUCTION

What makes Cappadocia so exceedingly strange are the twisted, billowing forms found in the rocks, forming a ream landscape. Over millions of years, erosion covered the land with thick layers of volcanic tufa forming rock pinnacles, which were then then hewn out by man into unique, evocative monuments.

The history of Cappadocia begins some 60 millions of years ago, when the corrugating motion of the earth's crust led to the raising of the Tauern chain. These telluric motions were accompanied by volcanic eruptions right throughout the area; the three tall peaks that dominate the region — Erciyeş Dağ (3917 metres), Hasan Dağ (3263 metres) and Göllü Dağ — were active volcanoes; these volcanoes are still considered potentially active, even though they have not erupted since the dawn of history as prehistoric and Roman records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Ceneközu
Ozancik
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Cullar
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Kocas
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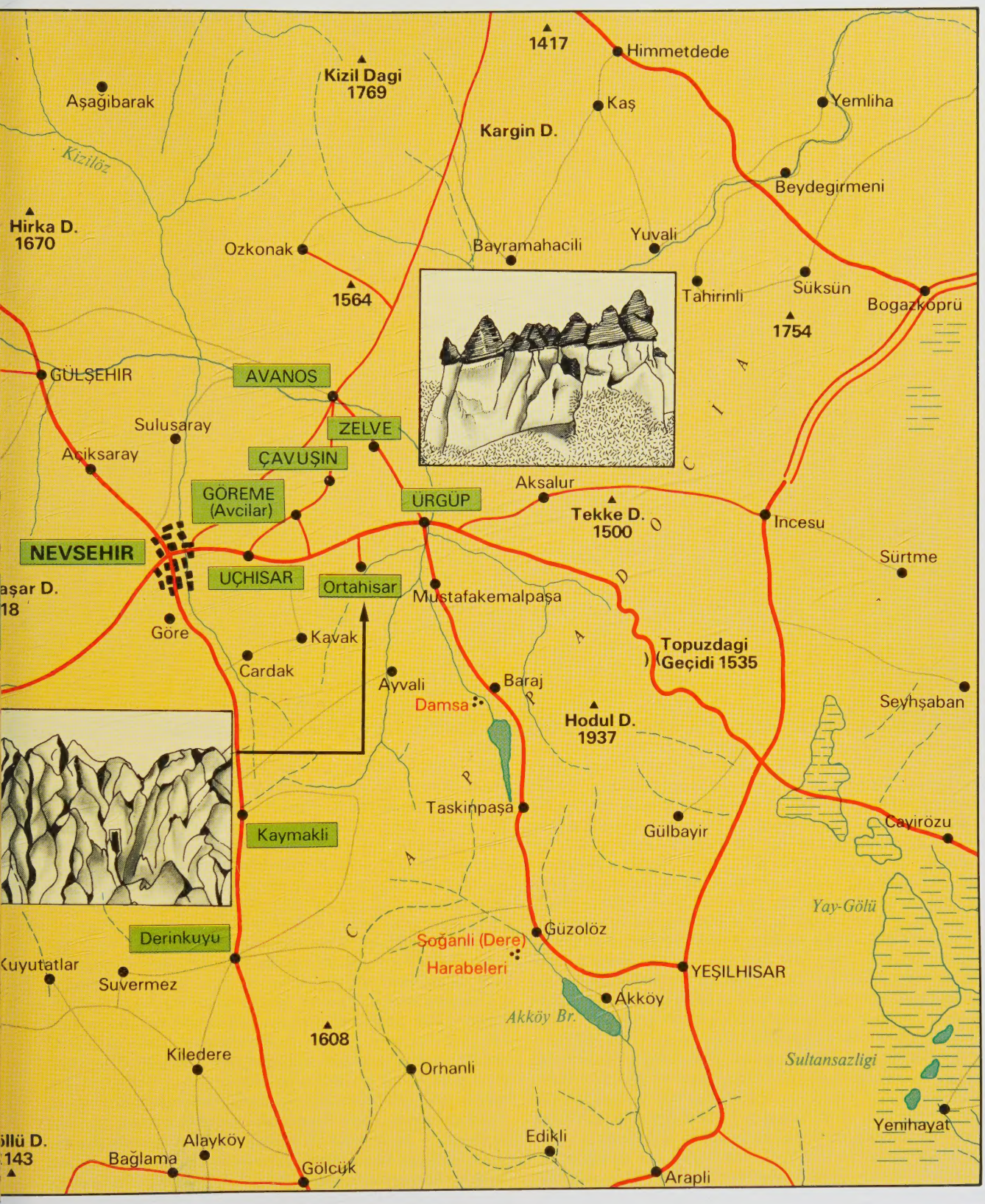
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GÜLŞEHIR
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(Avcilar)
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YEŞILHISAR
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Yenihayat
Alayköy
Edikli
Bağlama
Gölcük
Arapli

referred to legendary eruptions.
Like all volcanic eruptions, what accompanied the formation of the Tauren range caused the dispersion of enormous quantities of ash, lapilli and lavae. Once deposited on the ground in this order — from top to bottom — these materials were cemented by geological sedimentation in subsequent eras, forming a rocky tableland. However the erosive process of winds, ice and water ate into the crust, opening up faults and erosion furrows in the ground. The varying hardness of the rocks led to varying degrees of erosion; in the soft tufa on the surface, it created deep clefts, inside which the wind then moulded rock pinnacles. However, in the strong, dark basalts, water produced fine crevices in which it penetrated, deepening the cracks until it created vertical cuts across the basalt on the surface and the underlying tufa. In time, water and wind have gradually reduced the rocky tableland to a mass of clustered spires, covered by thicker slabs; over millions of years, the spires have become interspersed, due to the disappearance of some of them, and have taken on the pinnacle shape which we can still see today in Zelve, for instance, in the fairy chimney area. In patches, erosion has completely eliminated the basalts, reducing the tufa to a series of fading mounds.
The Kizilirmak River — the longest in Turkey — is fed by various streams, partly due to the melting of the snow-fields on the highest peaks. The flow rate of these streams used to be much greater; in fact, they are responsible for the canyons in the "Snow White Valley" and in the valley of Ihlara, with its lush vegetation in the midst of a barren area.
This fairy-tale landscape has always fascinated man, who has populated it with myths and legends and even settled there. During the VIII and VII millenium B.C., Neolithic peoples settled there in Hacilar and Catalhöyük, where the oldest paintings in the region came to light, also portraying the volcano of Erciyeş. With the arrival of the Copper (VI millenium) and Bronze Ages, it acquired its own ethnic and cultural features, to the point of forming the Hatti civilization during the the III millenium B.C.. According to Assyrian archives, the capital of the kingdom was in Kanech, now known as Kültepe. In about 1900 B.C., the Hatti civilization changed with the arrival of the Nesa in the region; the merging of the two peoples gave rise to the Hittite civilization, which remained in power for seven centuries in the Middle East. The Hittite dynasties ruled over a real empire, which fought the Babylonians and kings of the Mitanni to reach the boundaries of Egypt. The sun set on the Hittites during the XIII century due to invasions by new peoples, leaving a federated kingdom of Tabal in Cappadocia. Subsequently, torn between the Lydians in the south and the Medes in the north, Cappadocia became a Persian satrapy in the mid VI century B.C.. In 404 and 362 B.C., its inhabitants rose up against the Persian Empire, which was attacked by Alexander the Great of Macedonia. Alexander then oppressed a Cappadocian revolt in 332 B.C. but, after the struggle between the diadochoses upon the death of Alexander, it was Ariartes II who founded the Kingdom of Cappadocia, which survived until the end of the II century B.C.. The Romans then invaded Anatolia, annexing the area to the Roman Empire in 66 B.C. The province thus formed was very important for the control of its boundaries and for the political struggles within the Roman Empire. Roman ruins testify to the importance of defence, as can be seen from the various citadels. However, they were unable to hold back the Sasanidi nor the Goths in the III century A.D..
In 396, the annexation of Cappadocia to the Eastern Roman Empire led to the complete Christianization of the region. The local inhabitants took fervently to the creed, remaining in close contact with the central Byzantine authority. Religious communities played a particularly active role, preaching spirituality and self-denial. In this way, the early Christian hermits attracted to the area formed religious communities, hewing monasteries out of the rock pinnacles. The first rock caves built by the monks themselves as in the case of St Simeon, who built a cell in which to enchain himself, were replaced by other, more elaborate monastic complexes, especially after the end of Iconoclasm; in fact, this doctrine which opposed the worship of holy images, led to a recovery of spiritual values, that lasted even after the end of the destruction of holy images. The Open-Air Museum in Göreme, for instance, is tangible evidence of this spirituality and devotion to Christ and the Saints.
The building of complexes in the vertical rocks was quite a feat, but they managed to do an excellent job, getting ideas from Byzantine churches and reinterpreting the structures with emphasis on elegance and symbolism. The artists were not to be outdone by the architects, as can be seen from the series of frescoes in the dark interiors of chapels, often portraying scenes from the life of Christ. These artists, some of whom not only worked in Cappadocia but wandered throughout the entire Middle East, filled the vaults of churches with vivid colours and countless images of saints, creating a style of their own distinguished by its symbolism. The influence of mosaics in basilicas in Eastern and Western capitals was mitigated by the spirituality of local monks.
The monks' retreat to isolated hermitages protected them from the Arab raids but not from the Turks; however, the Seljuks were very tolerant towards Christians in the area, as can be seen from the presence of certain sultans in the frescoes of some churches, Nonetheless, the Seljuks — and Alaeddin Keykubat in particular — studded Cappadocia with marvellous mosques and caravanserais to defend the caravan route network. In fact, their supremacy, which started in the XI century, was accompanied by an economic boom, thanks to the exploitation of inland trade routes, and an artistic revival, as can be seen from the finely worked monuments which have been a source of inspiration to Muslim art ever since. Seljuk power declined at the end of the XIII century, under the pressures of the Karamanğullari and, after the rule of Eretna Bey (1352), their power knew no bounds. After over a century — during which the Eretna oğullari and Karamanğullari built valid monuments and restored various fortresses in Cappadocia — it was the Ottoman Empire that took over. This annexation brought a long period of peace to the region, which was inland and therefore more protected, even though art and the economy did not flourish. The Ottoman Empire, which lasted until the beginning of this century, was then overthrown by internal struggles to form a Republic, with the creation of modern day Turkey in 1923.

Scenic view of Ürgüp.

ÜRGÜP

The town of Ürgüp is on the road from Kayseri to Nevşehir and Aksaray. It is built at the foot of a large, slightly sloping plateau. The oldest dwellings, built againt the crags into which they sometimes penetrate, consist of blocks of local pink and beige tufa, which blend in with the landscape.

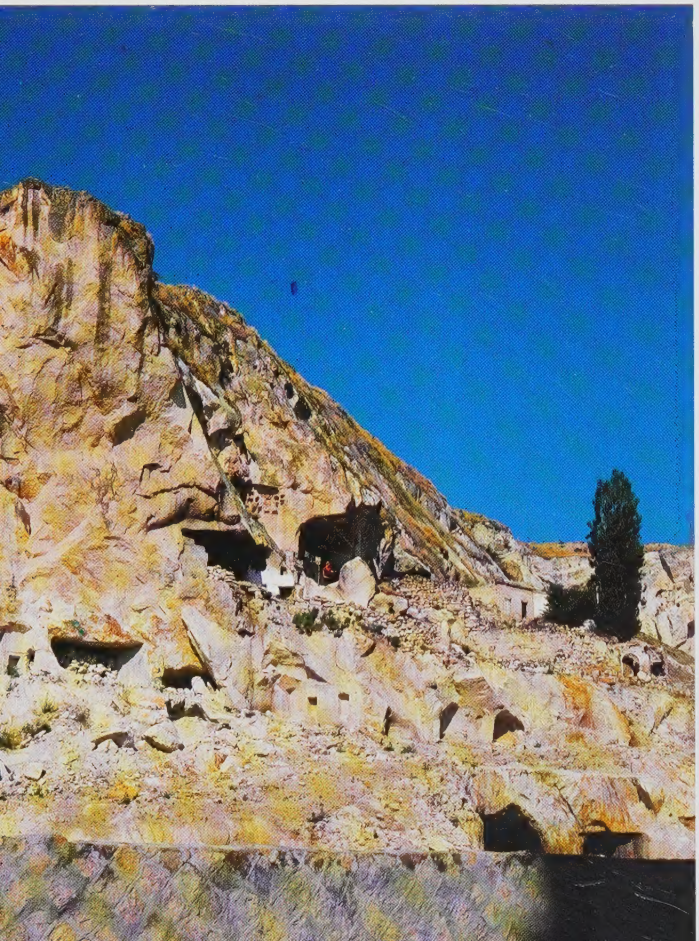
In fact, with their flat roofs, buildings are camouflaged against the square jagged rocks that erosion has isolated from the steep slopes of the plateau. Near the ancient village, whose dwellings are lost in the underlying plain, stands a large tourist resort, consisting of a series of modern buildings in keeping with traditional local architecture. In this way, public infrastructures required for the influx of tourists — including a museum — are functional without disturbing the evocative panorama. In fact, the attraction of Ürgüp and outlying villages lies in its unusual geological features. It is surrounded by wide areas crossed by pinkish gorges near tufa quarries and so-called fairy chimneys which characterize the landscape between Ürğup and Nevşehir. In fact, they are tall pinnacles of tufa, often with large blocks balanced on top; the rocks, faulted through geological movements, have enabled atmospheric agents to infiltrate between the individual blocks, moulding and isolating the pinnacles, which are protected by the rocks balancing on top of them against rainfall.

A matter of kilometres from Ürgüp, numerous churches and chapels are dotted here and there over a vast area; they include the ancient buildings of the Balkan valley (VI century) in the direction of Ortahisar. Near Cemil stands the Basmelek Monastery ("of the Archangel"), whereas Ayvalik boasts the churches of Karaçali and Yucari.

In the village of Tagar stands the **St. Theodore's Church** — worshipped widely by the local inhabitants — built inside the rock-face. Crumbling in parts, the St. Theo-

Houses in Ürgüp blend in with the rocks.

Fairy chimneys near Ürgüp. ▶



dore's Church is one of the largest in the area and consists of four central supports and a dome. Hollowed out of the tufa, it features interesting building pillars leading to round arches; the latter are crowned by low slits with small pillars featuring capitals. Above these openings — reminiscent of women's galleries in stone churches — one can admire in the lunettes gable-shaped mouldings, on which the dome — which has since become a skylight — once stood. Frescoes, which are partly geometric and figurative, date back to the XI and XIII centuries.

In the Golgoli valley, very little of the ancient frescoed buildings are still standing.

There is also a fine example of Islamic art here: near Damsa one can admire the Taşkimpacha complex. It also features a XVI century mosque, consisting of a rectangle with three naves covered by a barrel vault and dome; mention must be made of the portals and wooden altar. Nearby stands a smaller mosque, the minaret and a lovely courtyard.

Fairy chimneys and a stall with dolls in regional costume.

The honeycombed rock in the centre of Ortahisar.

ORTAHISAR

Ortahisar, or "middle" fortress, is on the road from Nevşehir to Ürgüp, but is closer to the latter. The village is distinguished by a series of buildings which are picturesque in their simplicity; the oldest constructions consist of tufa blocks laid dry without mortar. These houses and warehouses — used for storing fruit and vegetables — are usually double-storeyed; access is gained to the top floor by means of a flight of steps (consisting of tufa slabs fixed into the wall) often without a balustrade. More modern buildings are made of the same local stone in masonry; outer surfaces are white-washed and decorated with simple mouldings. Therefore the town complex is characterized by extreme simplicity and the similarity of the buildings, usually with flat roofs; in the narrow streets one still comes across carts on four small wheels, equipped with boards and canvas covers over the coachman's seat. Near the village square stands a jagged rock similar to a tower called Sivrikaya; countless rooms have been hewn out inside its peak. It has crumbled in parts, enabling one to see the interiors of some of its rooms and repairs have been done to the original dry wall complex.

From Ortahisar, one can reach the nearby churches of Sarica and Harum, whereas the town boasts a lovely mosque crowned by a white minaret.

On leaving the built-up area, one can visit the rocky mountains surrounding Ortahisar which provide an excellent view of the town: a stretch of small and white cubes in the centre of which stands a huge, pock-marked crag, whose shape changes in accordance with the angle from which you look at it. Having left the village and heading in the direction of Aktepe, one crosses an area of particular interest due to its unusual colours and contours. From the heights of Aktepe, we can look over the eiry-looking ridges as far as Kizilçukur, Çavusin, El Nazar and Uçhisar.

The high peak of Uçhisar, visible also at a distance.

Two views of Uçhisar, where the houses blend in with the rocks. ▶

UÇHISAR

The triple rock of Uçhisar is near to Göreme. At a distance, the town looks as though it is crowned by a rocky skyscraper studded with little windows; in time, some of the walls have been washed away, leaving the rooms inside open to the sky. This block of tufa is in some ways reminiscent of nearby Ortahisar, with which Uçhisar forms a chain of forts blocking access to Cappadocia. In ancient times, these fortresses were used for defence purposes; they were first discovered by the Hittites and then used by the Persians and Macedonians. The Byzantines utilized them to filter Islamic raids; in fact the lie of the land makes it hard to cross but easy to defend, enhanced by the camouflaging of the homes and monasteries inside the rocky banks.

The Muslims also made full use of its defence structures, settling in the area which already featured small centres with caravanserais.

Even today the roughness of the land is still very marked and around the town and central crag are a number of fairy chimneys. The citadel which towers several tens of metres above the town looks like a large cylindrical tower flanked by a pointed fault when seen from the west. In ancient times, a tunnel was hewn for several hundred metres under the houses out of the tufa of the mountain in order to guarantee a water supply in the event of siege.

Here too, as in Ortahisar, the modern part of the town is fitted out for tourists; from a nearby hotel, partly

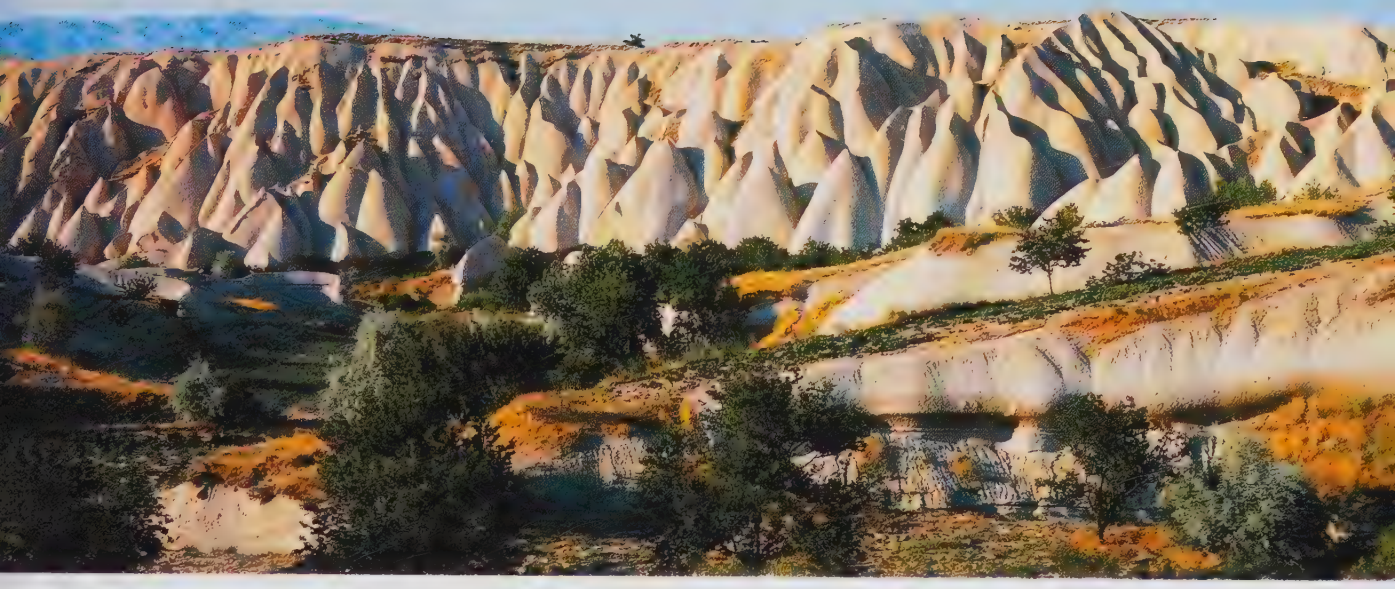
◄ *The eiry landscape around Uçhisar.*

◄ *On a panoramic rise, stalls sell characteristic copperware.*

A pigeon-loft in Uçhisar.

built into the rock-face in a particularly scenic area, one can admire both the village in its entirety and its light-coloured eroded crags between deep gorges.
Nearby this hotel stands a so-called "pigeon-loft": these buildings are quite frequent in Cappadocia, but here they are even more common. In fact, there is a valley near Uçhisar called the "Valley of the pigeon-lofts": a wide stretch of constructions and lodgings built into the rock-face in ancient times and recently, since they are still in use. Inside them countless niches have been carved out for birds who, by nesting there, form layers of guano which is then collected and used as fertilizer. The ground, which consists of compounds derived from washed away tufa is suitable for farming if well fertilized and carefully irrigated. Not only does tufa cover the high ground in the area; the rocky spires also consist of yellow and green onyx which is then finely crafted. A deep gorge opens up near Uçhisar; originally a confluence of waterways, a canyon heads in the direction of Ak Vadi. The plateau eroded by the rivers features a cleft where the vegetation ceases to grow, giving way to white, curved slopes. The very name of the crags has given the valley its name: "snow white"; at the bottom of the steep slopes, the gorge of the river bed becomes a chasm and the vertical walls are marked horizontally by various degrees of erosion.
Continuing along the road from Uçhisar and heading northwards one arrives in **Avçilar**, situated near the turn-offs to Çavusin and Zelve in the north and Göreme in the east. At present the village is equipped for tourists with hotels, bars and restaurants. In keeping with tradition, they have tried to blend in the old with the new; that is why new facilities have been partially or completely dug out of the rock surface.
Avçilar also dates back to ancient times; evidence of this lies in the tomb, attributed to the Roman era,

Two pigeon-lofts in Uçhisar.

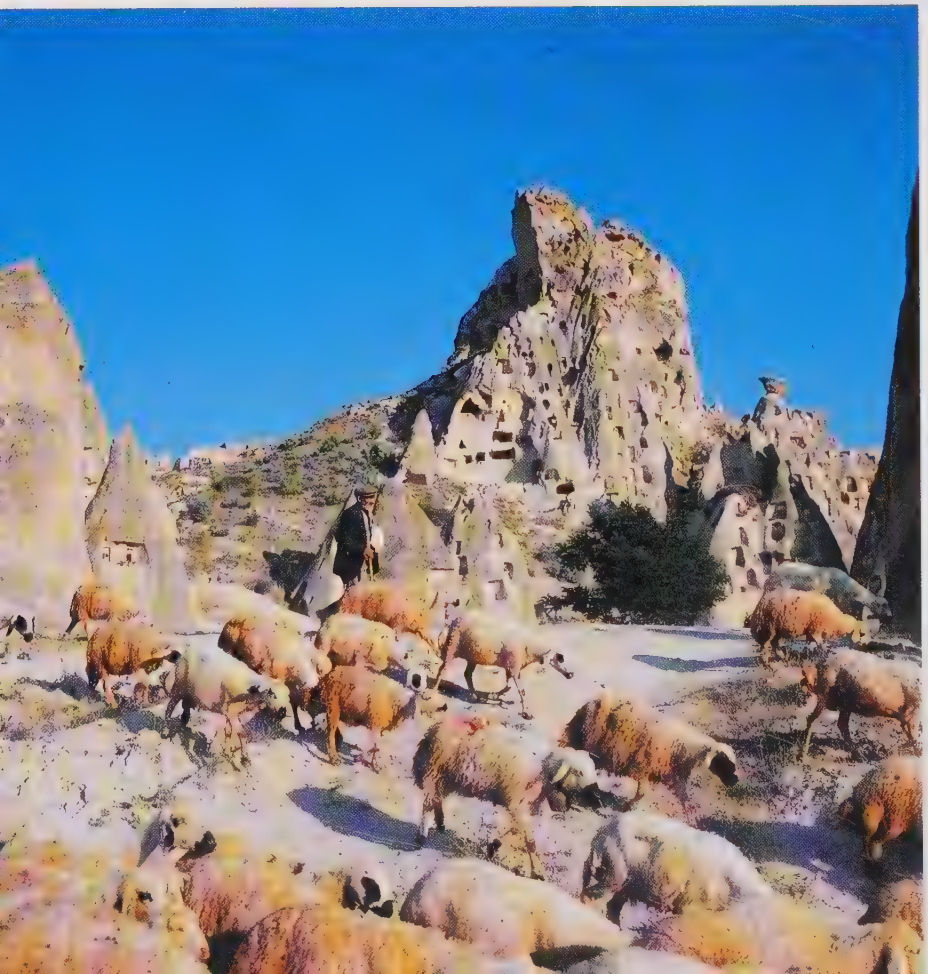


The bizarre appearance of the countryside around Uçhisar.

whose half-crumbling façade rises up near the village on a rock. In fact it is a type of rock tomb with its façade carved out of the rocky mass and honeycombed rooms. Originally the façade was designed as a sort of temple pronaos, embellished by a triangular gable; below it two mouldings imitate the space of the trabeation, supported by two columns crowned, with simplified Doric capitals. The pronaos then opens out into two symmetrical accesses to the inner burial chambers; at present — due to a landslide — all that remains of the front is the upper part with two broken columns suspended in mid air; there is no danger of them collapsing as they form part of the tomb and its rock.

The oldest dwellings are those hewn out of the rock pinnacles scattered here and there on the plain. As in other parts of Cappadocia, initially the local inhabitants honeycombed apartment complexes with square rooms in the tufa crags.

In more recent — and peaceful — times, houses have been strewn against the pinnacles and in the spaces between them with simple cubic buildings in dry stone. More modern white-washed houses do not differ a great deal from the old houses, keeping the narrowness of the windows and their cubic appearance; some of them are embellished by large ogive arches on the ground floor, providing access to storehouses, stables or shops. Tourism has, in fact, boosted local handicrafts, including the production of carpets which, in this area, are distinguished by simple multicoloured geometric patterns.

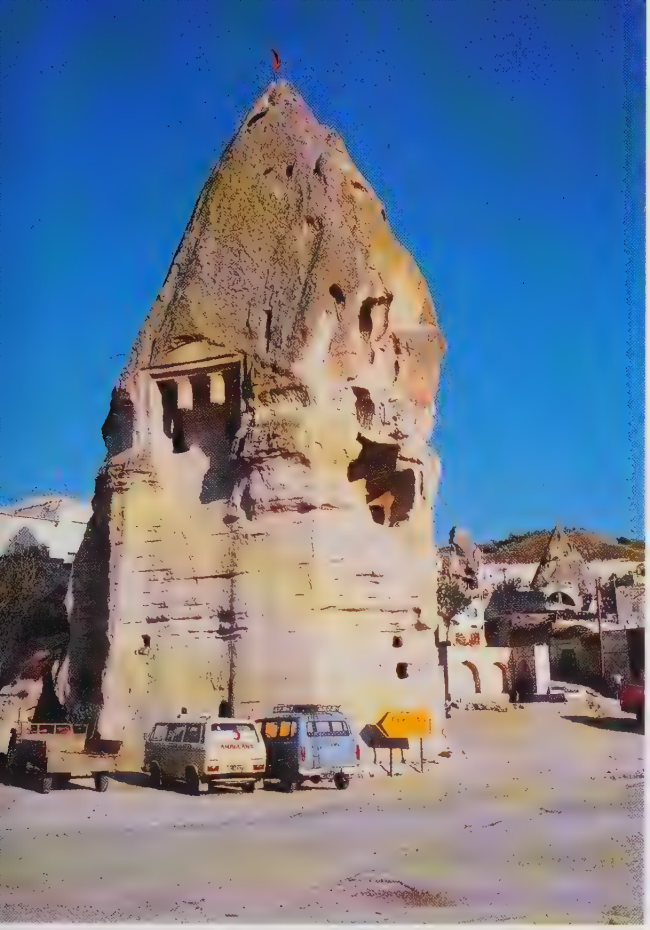


Three views of Uçhisar, one of the most typical spots in Cappadocia.

GÖREME

The Göreme area has been occupied since the dawn of history; more recently it was occupied by Christians who, under the threat of Muslim attacks, moved to this area where geological conditions made it easier to hide. In fact, the oldest churches in the area — very few of which are still standing — date back to the VII century. Christians and communities of monks turned the area into a place of refuge and refreshment, setting up their hide-outs inside the tufa pinnacles, which were easily camouflaged and defended. Skilled stone masons were thus free to express themselves by getting ideas from churches built in masonry in the large towns with a marked preference for ornateness, which later disappeared. With the exception of the Iconoclastic period (between 715 and 843) when the churches only tolerated abstract, symbolic decorations, painting came into its own here, leading to a Cappadocian style inspired by stylistic features in the large towns, and which itinerant artists reinterpreted and schematized according to the needs of the habitués of the monasteries. The fact that the figures and natural elements were highly stylized is perhaps due to the fact that churches were placed in a large monastic complex; to the monks, the frescoed figures could only have been a reference to the Holy Scriptures with which they were familiar. The rather poor workmanship (often funds had to be collected to finance the frescoes) combined with the Iconoclastic influence contributed to the abstraction and awkwardness: oval vaults, square busts and fixed expressions. Local religious architecture was divided into typologies partially connected to periods, albeit controversial. There are still differences of opinion on the dating of the abstract or symbolic geometric designs; it is generally believed that they date back to the Iconoclastic era and, as they are painted directly onto the rock walls, the date of the actual building of the complexes has been deduced. However, it would appear that these paintings are in fact more recent and were only used to decorate the walls while waiting for the final figurative decoration, executed on a coat of plaster. The exact date of the monuments has, therefore, been recently changed to the XI century; however, the sequence of architectural phases has remained unchanged: churches with a square plan, covered by flat and barrel roofs and featuring a small semi-circular apsidiole followed by churches built along similar lines but with three apses; only later did churches with three naves closed by columns (4 or 8) come into existence. The most recent type, introduced in Constantinopolis during the IX-X century and diffused in Cappadocia as from the beginning of the XI, follows a roughly rectangular plan with four columns placed in the centre of the room, and a lowered floor. The central vault — and sometimes also the side ones — is covered by a dome, whereas the bottom wall opens out into three apsidioles.

Churches of this kind also housed the aforementioned



In the centre of the village, evocative ruins of a rock tomb.

The new part of Göreme, built among the ancient tufa pinnacles.

On account of their ancient origin (dating back over 2,000 years), the Turkish carpets can be considered the forerunners of all Eastern carpets. The typical Cappadocian product is the so-called kilim *which, unlike the others, does not have a fleece. In fact, it is not knotted and the weft does not have structural thread. However, all the other carpets are woven with double knots (Turkish or ghiordes), whereas the other system with a simple knot is Persian or senneh.*
The bright, sparkling colours in Turkish carpets have a symbolic meaning: red, the commonest, means wealth and happiness; yellow and black keep away evil spirits; blue is the symbol of nobility and green indicates Paradise.

Two views of the Open-Air Museum in Göreme

symbolic paintings which were sometimes covered by layers of plaster. The animals depicted each represented something: the fish, due to its Greek name "iktus" which stood for the phrase "Iesus Kristos Teou Uios Soter" that is "Jesus Christ son of God, Saviour" —, symbolizes Christ himself, while the dove has always been the symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. Deer symbolize the soul and peacocks the resurrection whereas it is not certain what other animals were supposed to symbolize: the cock — which represented the day, vitality and light and, in the wider sense, goodness to the Greeks — and the palm, direct oriental evolution of the tree of life and portrayal of vital energy and eternity.

Some rock structures in the area were used for burial purposes: one of the most evocative examples is to be found upon one's arrival in Göreme, where a rock pinnacle contains a mortuary chapel embellished by a small façade. The interior features a square room with a pew leading to a lunette apse; in the floor — and at a later stage also in the pews — graves were hewn; they were then covered by fitted slabs.

The Göreme area also includes the El Nazar valley where the fairy chimneys house rock complexes, like the "Church of the Madonna"; the nearby valley of Kiliçlar Vadisi contains another church called "Church of Kiliçlar", which, despite its lack of frescoes, boasts fine four-columned architecture.

The Girls Monastery in Göreme.

CAVE CHURCHES OF GÖREME

In the valley of Göreme stands an Open-Air Museum which used to house a religious community. Numerous churches make up a large monastic complex, all hewn out of the cliffs and crags. The promoter of the community was St Basil — Bishop of Caesarea (Kayseri) — who wanted to break away from the tendency at the time towards rather large communities or individual hermitages.

Local tradition has it that there were as many as 356 churches, one for each day of the year, of which about thirty are open to the public. They can be visited but are not plainly visible from the outside: in fact, by digging into the rocks, there was no need for any type of construction itself apart from the outside of the huge jagged rocks in the valley. The rocks are bare and barren in appearance, apart from

Three views of the monastic complex in Göreme.

air shafts, skylights and entrances. This enabled the monks to retreat from the outside world and defended them against the Turkish invasions during the XI century in Byzantine territory. All churches still standing in Göreme were built after about 850 A.D. and decorated up to the XI century with frescoes which, despite their Byzantine influence, have extremely simple lines.

The same architecture in the interiors is a reinterpretation of Byzantine and Syrian buildings. Despite their ability to work tufa under difficult technical conditions, artisans sometimes built asymmetric, misaligned churches, making them outlandish and picturesque. On the other hand, the sculptured details and the very colonnades and pillars, hewn out of the rock, have no real function and are purely ornamental.

Architectural features were enhanced by paintings by professional artists financed by locals.

Various inscriptions — sometimes accompanied by portraits — bear the name of the artist and his financers; accurate historic and iconographic research have ascertained that benefactors were usually country squires who sometimes formed trusts to carry out costly works of art.

These frescoes were painted just after the downfall of the Iconoclasts, who prohibited the presence of holy images in the Byzantine area between the mid-VIII and IX centuries. In fact, the excessive adoration of the holy images on the part of the congregation who used reliquies of paintings as amulets or thaumaturgical objects encouraged the Muslim religion, the abandonment of holy iconography and the destruction of existing works of art. In fact, it was during the post-Iconoclastic era that the churches of Göreme were built and painted with various techniques directly onto the tufa walls or on top of a coat of plaster.

It is the very impermeability of tufa, apart from the constant temperature of the rooms, that has kept the colours alive after so many centuries.

Three pictures of the frescoes inside the Tokali Kilise: above, the panels on the north wall; to the right the Crucifixion on the dome of the main apse and a theory of Saints.

TOKALI KILISE

Among the churches in the rock of Göreme, the richest in paintings is the church known as Tokali Kilise, or "Church with the buckle". Its name comes from a decoration on one of its two arches which has since disappeared. Built probably between the IX and X centuries, its interior is divided into two distinct areas: the front part, or vaulted narthex, is called the "Old Church" whereas the other area, distinguished by its four colums on the front and three apsidal recesses, apart from a side room, is called the "New Church". Painting commenced soon after it had been built: in about 920 the series in the Old Church was executed, portraying *Scenes from the life of Christ* on the vault. This magnificent cycle is divided up into 29 scenes: from the *Annunciation* (a rather unusual scene at the time) as far as the *Ascension*, through the *Nativity*, the *Slaughter of the Innocents*, the *Flight into Egypt*, the *Baptism*, the various *Miracles*, the *Ordeal*, the *Crucifixion* and the *Resurrection*. In the Old Church, these scenes from the Gospel are accompanied by pictures of various *Saints*.

About thirty years later, the frescoes in the New Church were painted on the barrel vaults and in the apsidal bowl-shaped vault by an artist called Nikephoros; in fact, part of his name has remained in an inscription on the left wall, part of which has peeled off, exposing an older decoration with red lines on a light-coloured background. The inscription invited visitors to pray for "Leo, son of Constantine" who financed the paintings. The scenes depicted against a rare blue background and full of captions represent about forty scenes from the life of Christ: there is no shortage of scenes from the *Old Testament* and pictures of *Saints*, including *St Simeon Stilita*. It is worth mentioning episodes from the *Life of St Basil*, promoter of the Göreme complex: the *Council of Nicaea*, *Basil and the Emperor Valens*, *Prayers for the Artisans and the Orthodox*, the *Meeting with St Ephraim*, the *Absolution of the sinner*.

Paintings in the Elmali Kilise: the apse of the church and the Pantocrator on the central dome; to the right, the Founders of the Church frescoed in the underside of the arches.

ELMALI KILISE

This cave church was built in about 1050 and, despite Muslims flocking into the area, it reveals close ties with Byzantine architecture in its structures and frescoes. Its name, meaning "Church with the Apple" probably refers to an apple tree that grew in the vicinity. The frescoes that still exist are painted on a coat of plaster on top of pre-existing geometric designs, which were recently attributed to the post-Iconoclastic XI century. Paintings on the cupolas — in bright shades of yellow, brown, white, blue and red — portray *Scenes from the Life of Christ*, *Saints and Archangels*, whereas the arches of the columns and pendentives with medallions feature *Prophets, Patriarchs* and *Evangelists*.

The outside of the Karanlik Kilise.

Three frescoes of the Dark church: Christ between the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist; Anastasis and the Evangelists John and Mark.

KARANLIK KILISE

The so-called Karanlik Kilise, or "Dark Church" was in fact a real monastic complex. Like other monastic retreats in Göreme (Elmali Kilise, Çarikli Kilise), the Dark Curch was also built during the XI century, financed by at least four benefactors portrayed in its frescoes. Unfortunately, part of its narthex collapsed, leaving it open to the sky. Originally a stairway led from this hall to the real church and the monks' living quarters on the floor above, which included an interesting refectory. Here craftsmanship was more accurate than in other churches, revealing the intention to create monasteries identical to those in masonry. The narthex or vestibule was a vast rectangular area and had a flat ceiling, probably lit up by some skylights on the side that has since collapsed; from this side the room is now open to the sky. The long, perfectly smooth wall that is still standing is divided up by two vertical pilaster strips and by a long horizontal profiling into compartments. Underneath the profiling three doors open out — one for each empty space — in different proportions which increase downwards. At the top, however, there is a series of false rounded niches featuring engravings

of Greek crosses; the same distance between the pilaster strips has meant that the false niches are grouped in irregular numbers: six above the smallest part, five above the medium-sized door and seven above the large door. The wall at the bottom of the vestibule bears a severely damaged fresco with *Christ's Ascension* and the *Benediction of the Saints*, whereas the other scenes are only partially leggible; more so to the left, where the wall collapsed.

A stairway leads to the real church built in the shape of a cross with four columns, a central dome and three apsidioles. The floor is lower than that of the entrance and the apses, whereas the colonnade with capitals supports round arches and concentric cupolas. The church's name is fully justified: in fact, a small oculus looking out of the narthex is the only source of light; however, there was even less light in past centuries, when the narthex was not short of a wall. However, it was this protection against the light and changes in humidity that has preserved the fine frescoes of Karanlik Kilise over the centuries. In fact they are much more alive than those in nearby churches; probably the aforementioned group of benefactors were in a position to pay for better quality architecture and painting. The scenes depicted in the church represent episodes from the *New Testament*, on a blue background made of lapislazuli; the most outstanding panels portray *Christ Almighty* on the main dome, the *Nativity*, the *Baptism*, the *Last Supper*, *Christ's Betrayal*, the *Crucifixion* and pictures of the various *Saints* and *Evangelists*.

On the floor above are the refectory and dormitories. The collapse of the wall has partially obliterated a long barrel-vaulted room which is divided up by two square spaces with pillars crowned by cupolas at the ends and mid-way. The refectory has been entirely hewn out of the rock: from the double apse at the bottom to the table, benches and the place for the Father Superior at the head of the table.

Among the other noteworthy churches nearby is the "Nameless Church", which has internal colums and an apse with three dwarf arches. Among the simple frescoes painted directly onto the rock in red geometric designs is an outstanding cross at the entrance, executed with five discs.

The Pantocrator portrayed on two domes.

On the following pages, Judas's Betrayal, and, to the right, the Crucifixion.

SANDAL KILISE

Like the other churches, the Church of the Sandal was originally a monastic complex. Its appearance has since changed: the façade of the rock-face has collapsed, exposing the rooms above to the sky.
The vestibule of the lower floor was decorated with false horse shoe-shaped niches grouped between the pilaster strips at the top of the pillars, the lower parts of which are in a bad state of repair; originally, the niches housed decorations in the shape of the Greek cross. This room is reminiscent of the narthex of the nearby Karanlik Kilise, which was also built during the XI century. The name of the church comes from an imprint on the foor said to be a cast of Jesus's own footstep. Access was gained from the lower vestibule to two side rooms and to two rooms at the bottom, the left of which was the refectory. As in the Karanlik Kilise, the pews and table were sculpted out of live tufa. The room on the top floor — now reduced to a sort of rock-face by the collapse — bore, beneath simple red decorations

The exterior of the refectory near the Karanlik Kilise.

Three pictures of the Carikli Kilise, or Church of the Sandal: Christ enthroned, a holy scene and the Betrayal of Judas.

on the stone, the main entrance to the church framed between two false niches. The real church — which nowadays is only accessible through a metal stairway — consists of a square room divided on the right by two columns leading to arches which divided the cupolas on the vault. In the centre of the left wall is a square niche, whereas opposite the columns are three apsidioles, with the largest one in the centre. The three benefactors of the complex are portrayed in the frescoes of the church, and indicated by the names of Theognostos, Michael and Leon. The holy paintings narrate 13 episodes from the *Life of Christ*, while a large *Christ Almighty* is surrounded by medallions with *Saints* and *Evangelists*. The effigies of six *Bishops* in the main apse are accompanied by *Martyrs*, *Saints* and celebrities linked to Christianity: the martyrs of Cilicia Probus, Tarachos and Andronikos, St Praxedes, Constantine with Helen, Sts Cosmas and Damin, Eudochia and Barbara, Procopius and Theodore with George.

St Theodore and St George portrayed on a wall of the Church of St Barbara.

Symbolic paintings with an esoteric meaning frescoed in the Barbara Kilise.

BARBARA KILISE

One literally steps inside St Barbara's Church. Its plan is very similar to the Church of the Sandal: two columns, the cupolas (with a larger one in the centre), three apsidioles at the top and the small square room at the bottom. It was built in the late XI century and financed by benefactors whose names are recalled in a broken inscription: the priest Falibon and Leon Marulinus. The simplicity of the building is enhanced by its paintings which consist mainly of red lines forming geometric designs. This technique — which initially led art historians to believe that it belonged to the Iconoclastic era — was adopted in the majority of churches immediately after they were built. In fact, even more ornate churches initially featured simple frescoes painted directly onto the tufa. Certain easily identifiable motifs — such as birds - were accompanied by more abstract, geometric designs — such as triangles with sorts of prehistoric schematic trees -, which were associated in the community subconscious with a cult of the vital forces of nature. Of deeper Christian meaning are the crosses in the right apse, symbolizing Christ and his wounds (the cross in the circle) between the two crosses of the thieves. Other linear paintings are accompanied by frescoes painted on top of a coat of plaster, which are usually figurative: apart from *St Barbara*, after whom the church is named, the apse contains a Christ on the Throne, whereas the north wall portrays St George and St Theodore on horse-back struggling against the dragon and snake. The iconograph of these knights who killed scaly monsters was widely diffused in Asia Minor, since the Hittites believed in the myth of the god who kills a poisonous snake.

YILANLI KILISE

The Yilanli Kilise is surrounded by several rooms in the rock, including the refectory which is adjacent to the church, and several others above. The church itself is a long, narrow room divided into two different sections: the former is crowned by a high barrel vault, whereas the latter features a flat ceiling and is closed off by what remain of three semicircular dwarf arches.

Immediately after the entrance, the left wall bears a niche; an unusual architectural feature is the protrusion of the vault towards the centre of the room. This simple structure is decorated with mediochre paintings, which, like the construction date back to the XI century, and imitations of blocks of stone painted in the usual reddish colour.

To the right of the entrance, the upper part of the vault portrays three *Saints*, including St Thomas and an interesting *St Onofrio* in the nude; he is said to have been a hermit who, between the IV and V century, retreated to the Egyptian desert to meditate, dressed only in leaves and nourished only by palm dates. It is easy to understand the hermits of Göreme's extreme devotion to this saint.

However local legend has it that St Onofrio originally belonged to the female sex, but that God made her into a man to keep her away from sin; it is generally believed that this outlandish story originated from the fresco, which because of the unusual shape of the chest muscles and the coverage of the sexual organs with a palm, caused confusion as to the real sex of the saint.

The opposite wall portrays *St George and the dragon* and *St Theodore and the snake*; a Roman legionary maintained that the popular latter-mentioned saint was burnt alive in the Pontus because of his refusal to worship the pagan gods. Behind him stand *Helen and Constantine* holding the true cross, whereas the lunette that closes the barrel vault portrays Christ and, to the left, a much smaller figure represents the benefactor of the church.

The interior of the Yilanli Kilise, or Church with the Snake. Below, the real Cross is held by Helen and her son, the emperor Constantine; to the right St George and St Theodore combat the dragon and, below, the unusual portrayal of St Onophrius next to St Thamaros and Basil the Great.

Two views of the remaining XI century frescoes.

Countryside around Göreme.

Exterior of the Church of El Nazar, in the homonymous valley.

EL NAZAR KILISE

This church, which dates back to the XI century, is hewn out of an isolated tufa pinnacle. Part of the front collapsed, leaving some of the inside rooms open to the sky.

Above the two floors of rooms — largely demolished by the landslide — stood the church itself, built in a T-shape with strong pillars supporting the vaults. The ceiling was partly barrel vault and partly dome (in the area between the pillars). The precious paintings are in panels on the vaults, with various religious scenes and images of *Saints*, grouped together or standing side by side, apart from a *Christ enthroned among the angels*, which has largely been destroyed. The arches of the pillars, pendentives and keystones of the false barrel vaults are decorated with an enormous quantity of medallions which, similiar to icons, portray countless busts of *Saints*. The large central dome bears a *Christ giving a blessing* with a highly stylized face, surrounded by a procession of *Saints with angels* in flight.

Paintings of Christ and various saints in the medaillions.

This monastery stands a couple of hundred metres from the complex of Göreme. One can also visit some minor churches and chapels, apart from various cellars, including *St Basil Chapel*, where a long corridor leads to a rectangular room with three apsidioles at the bottom and simple decorations on the barrel vault, including geometric designs, *Saints*, *Christ* and *Mary*.

The area of Göreme between the Yilanli Kilise and Karanlik Kilise is occupied by a labyrinth of monks' cells (small square rooms with an apse) and communal halls, sometimes used as refectories, including one with a long table, whose adjacent room to the left features a column at the bottom. Other minor chapels are hewn out of this side of the rock: one consists of a single rectangular room with a central dome, two side apsidioles at the bottom and a rectangular apse leading to a central apse, while the other more elaborate chapel has four columns with an apsidiole at the bottom. The Girls Monastery is a separate entity. Apart from a refectory, it contains a church built in the form of the Greek cross and divided into four equal symmetric, square wings in the centre of which stands a dome; the wing in front of the entrance ends in an apse with a bowl-shaped vault.

The ruins of the Basilica of St John the Baptist in Çavuşin, the oldest in the whole area (VII century),

The huge boulder in Çavuşin and a landscape near the village.

ÇAVUŞIN

The villag of Çavuşin lies two and a half kilometres from Göreme, along the road to Avanos. This ancient settlement, like others which were built for sighting and defence purposes, is clustered around a large central rock. In Çavuşin, erosion led to a landslide destroying half the original rock (near the old part of the village large blocks of tufa are piled up) and leaving the walls and corridors of the ancient town open to the sky. To the right, one can admire smooth walls whose arches are still standing: this is the most intact part, even though it has recently been affected by landslides. In fact, it is a seismic area and deep verticrevices indicate further rockfalls. Without a doubt, the most peculiar feature of the rock is the stone slab which, at a height of 60 metres, virtually forms a roof.

This is the original site of the **Basilica of St John the Baptist**, hewn out of the rock and featuring three naves with columns; built in the XVIII century, part of it collapsed recently. Due to this threat, the present village is built in the plain below at a distance from the rockfall area.

Çavuşin is also known for its **Church of Niceforo Foca**, a couple of hundred metres from the village along the road to Avanos.

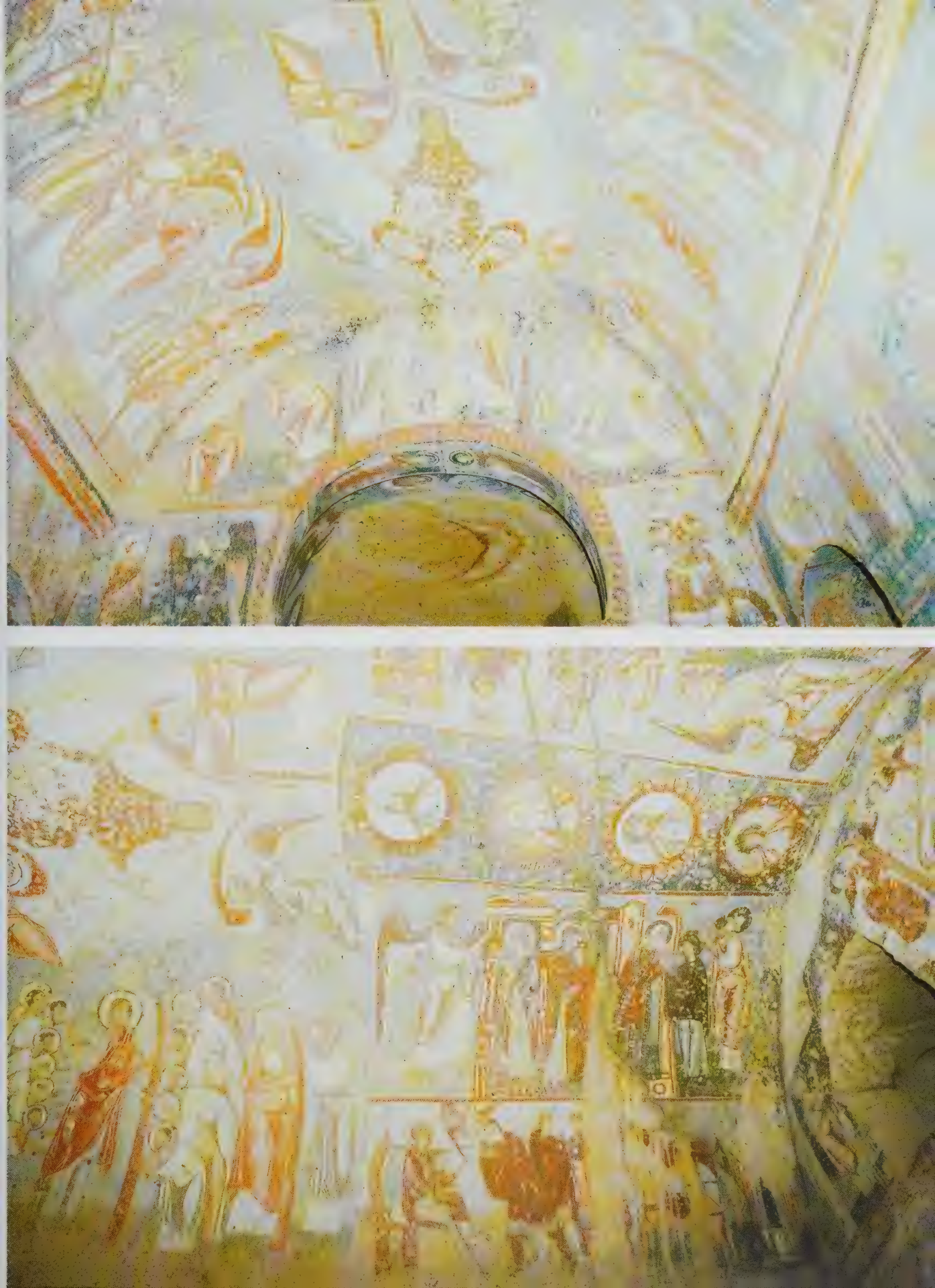
ÇAVUŞIN KILISE

The Çavuşin church, built outside the village, features a barrel-vaulted entrance that leads to the church itself, consisting of a room and three apses; the central apse is wider and covered by small vaults. Its architecture dates back to the same period as the Göreme complexes. However, the most interesting aspect of the church are its paintings, which are also rather archaic, especially in their use of colours: red, reddish-brown, white and green.

The good state of preservation of the paintings and the brightness of their colours has led them to be compared to the Dark Church in Göreme, which is perhaps more recent. In fact, it is generally believed that the frescoes were executed during the second half of the X century. The entrance is guarded by two half-crumbling *angels*, whereas inside are images of *Saints* and scenes from the *Life of Christ*.

These scenes are accompanied, in the medallions and on the panels, by images of various *Saints*; the main apse houses a large image of *Christ*, whereas at the sides the minor apses portray *St Thomas and St Bartholomew*.

The Church of Nicephorus Foca, on the road from Çavuşin to Avanos. The outside entrance and three pictures of the late X century frescoes; the Emperor Nicephorus Foca and the Empress Theophanes are portrayed in the north apse.



Small vineyards grow among the fairy chimneys in the Paşabag area.

On the following page, partial views amid the fairy chimneys.

THE FAIRY CHIMNEYS

Near Zelve, in the Paşabag area, one can admire in a valley the so-called "fairy chimneys", or "peri bacasi" in the local dialect. The valley is also known as the Valley of Monks due to the hermitages inside the tufa pinnacles.

What makes the valley exceedingly strange is the unusual shape of the stone formations; their chimney-pot shape led to the ancient legend that they were inhabited by fairies capable of casting all sorts of spells. At present, the area is crossed by the Çavuşin-Avanos road that cuts the plain in two; at the sides, fairy chimneys are scattered here and there among trees and vines.

The geological history of the fairy chimneys dates back many centuries: as we all know, the region is of volcanic origin and therefore consists of lythic types of varying quality and hardness. The Paşabag area, like most of the rest of the area, consists mainly of tufa rock, which, however is associated with harder types of basaltic rocks, recognisable in the "crown" of the chimneys. The combined action of various erosive agents wore away the surface layer of the hard, dark rock, exposing the highly friably underlying tufa. Therefore all that remains of the surface layer nowadays is the "hat" of the pinnacles; beneath them, a clear, almost horizontal line indicates the lower margin of the original lythic fault. The blocks that have remained isolated by erosion — especially of rain water — have since been split vertically, transforming them into pinnacles joined to one another or into groups of Pinnacles.

The collapse of some rock formations has progressively

Over milions of years, the fairy chimneys have gradually been moulded into pinnacles.

increased the distance between the remaining ones, whereas the fall of the basaltic hat has left the tufa at the mercy of rains, therefore on the point of being progressively consumed until they no longer exist.

On all these phases — obviously at various time intervals but capable of happening at the same time — we have documents in the Paşabag valley, where the capacity of the natural forces offers amazing spectacles.

The work of nature has been accompanied by the work of man: many pinnacles have been hewn out for hermitages and dwelling-places. The most unusual one is the chimney along the road featuring a hat at the top of a sort of natural column; inside it was a chapel and other rooms hewn out of the adjacent "hatless" needles.

One of the best known monasteries in the valley is, however, the pinnacle "of the monk Simeon": this large block of tufa crowned by three chmneys is hollowed out to form a chapel and other rooms at the top of a stairway, partly visible due to the collapse of a wall. The name of the pinnacle comes from a series of paintings in the chapel referring to the life of St Simeon: despite the mediochre quality of the paintings, dating back to the beginning of the X century, the subject is of great icongraphic and documentary interest.

In fact, the scenes of St *Simeon with his mother*, the *Vocation of the Saint* and his *Miracles* lets us know how important the saint was to the hermitage. In fact, it is common knowledge that St Simeon, who lived in ancient Antioch — nowadays Antakya — between 390 and 459, believed in the need to undergo dire hardship in order to ascend to heaven: not satisfied with having lived in a prison cell and in an empty cistern, he left the town to hew out a room in the rock in which he then lived in chains. The influx of pilgrims asking the saint for all kinds of grace made him change retreat once again; in fact, he went to live at the top of a column originally built of three rocks and subsequently raised by about 30 metres, where there was only room for one person. St Simeon inspired the monks of Paşabag to build their cells at the top of the high fairy chimneys, many of which look like natural columns.

Distant view of the fairy chimneys in Paşabag and, to the left, of Zelve.

Two pictures on the cave town of Zelve. ▶

On the following page, four views of Zelve.

ZELVE

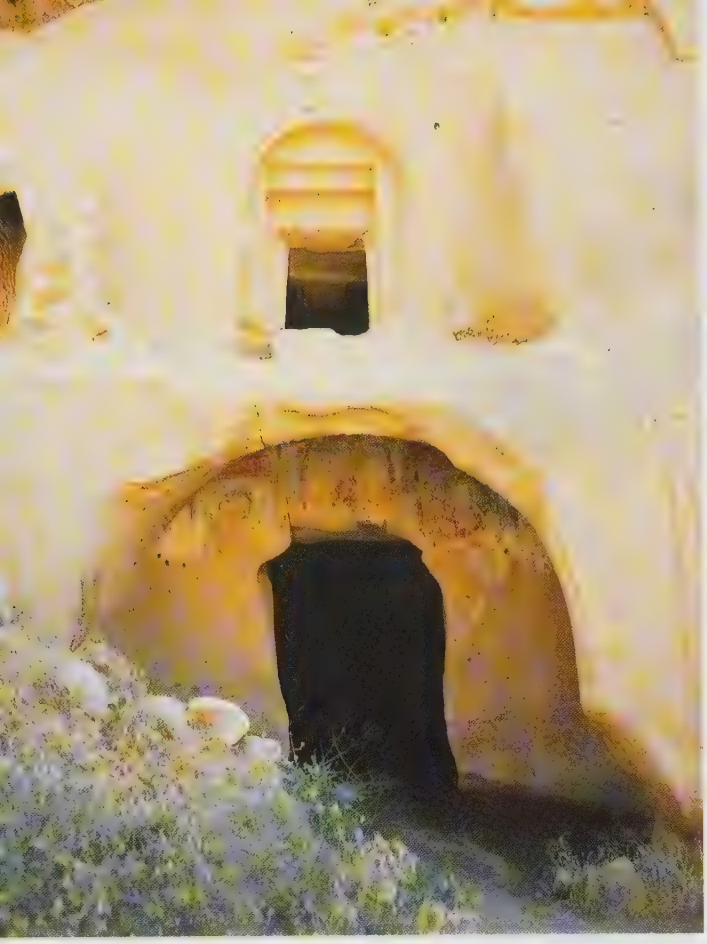
This village, situated between Avanos and Çavuşin, is distinguished by its particular geological and morphological condition. In fact, the village was built to exploit the natural configuration of the, plane, surrounded by masses of rocks opening out into two converging valleys. Erosion through rain water, wind and landslides — which gave rise to the fairy chimneys in nearby Paşabag and the unusual rock formations in the whole region — has been aggravated by water-bearing beds, capable of splitting the terrain deep down and causing natural cavities in the rocky soil.

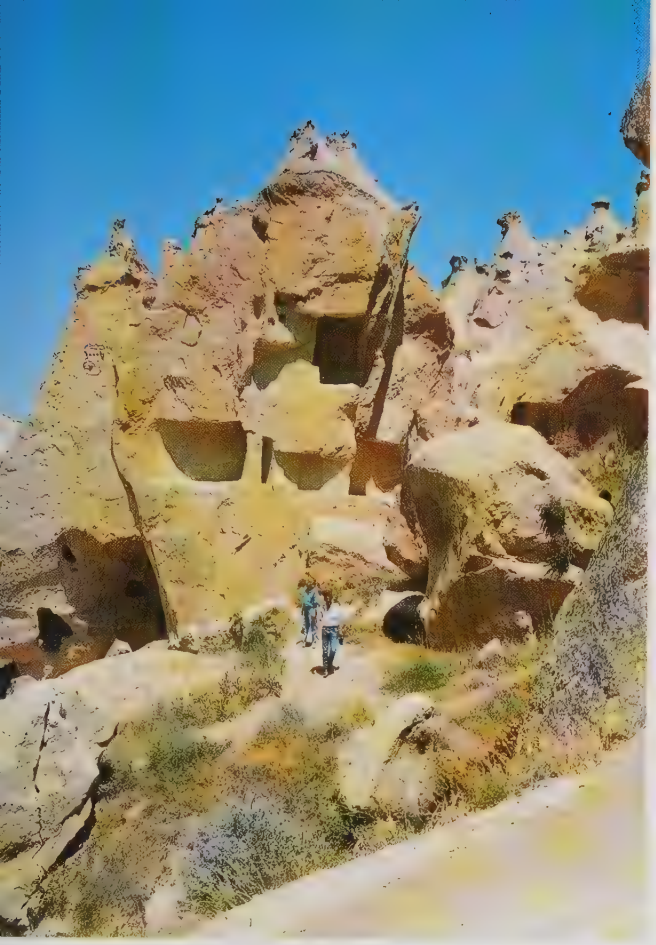
Zelve, like the rest of the Cappadocian region, is of volcanic origin. The volcano of Monte Argaeus ("Erciyeş Dağ" in the local dialect) is still active; 3917 metres high, it dominates the whole area and can be seen at a distance. As in the case of other unusually-shaped rock formations, the different compositions of the rocks and their resulting hardness (tufas, basalts) has enabled the various agents to mould the region in surrealistic ways.

The plain of ancient Zelve is partly divided by a high ridge splitting the landscape into two; it is curious to note that on the one side the rocks are pink, while on the other they are white. The village was built in the erosion furrows and into the rock-face, hewing out the tufa rock and sometimes exploiting large openings eroded by water. In these huge caves, entrances were dug to the deepest homes or, more recently, to the small buildings in masonry. The local community - first Christian and then Muslim - was numerous and has left traces of its unusual way of tunnelling through the bowels of the earth to construct a wide range of facilities: a church, water storage points, a mill, a flat-roofed room with benches in which a stone disc with a handle acted as a grindstone, rotating inside a drum cut out of the rock. Among the most important constructions are some churches which, despite their insignificant appearance and bad state of repair, are the oldest examples of architecture and religious painting in the region; in fact

Pictures of dwellings and churches hewn out of the rock in Zelve.

Three evocative pictures of the ancient village of Zelve.





To the left, the entrance to the Üzümlu Kilise, or Church with the Grape; a view of the double-naved interior and the fresco after which the church is named, showing a pergola full of grapes.

Exterior of a dwelling and mill-stone hewn out of the tufa.

On the following pages, three pictures of the cave town of Zelve.

they were executed during the Iconoclastic era, which can be seen from the lack of figures and wall engravings, when the cross was widely diffused on walls and ceilings. The **Üzumlü Kilise**, or Church with the Grape, is named after bunches of grapes schematically depicted on a whitish background in between vine-leaves. It is interesting to note the way the bunch has been reduced graphically to a rough, dark triangle without outlining the individual grapes: it is a widely diffused scheme in ancient art, as is the subject with its symbolic values. Already a religious symbol for Greek Dionysian rituals and for other previous Eastern religions, according to the Christian religion, the vine represents Christ himself: in fact, there is a parable about the vine that produces good fruit, and at the last supper Jesus identified his blood in the wine and his body in the bread, initiating their symbolic value for his followers. In the **Geyikli Kilise**, the Church with the Deer, one can find other paintings which, unfortunately, have been severely damaged and, in parts, destroyed; one of the broken walls portrayed, alongside the cross, a fish and deer which gave the name to the church. These symbols, which also exist in other churches in Göreme, respectively represent Christ — through an acrostic which means that Jesus is the son of God and saviour — and the soul.

When Zelve was taken over by Muslims, it also contained a mosque hewn out of the rock; however, its builders must have been inspired by Christian architecture as the minaret is influenced by the bell-towers of monasteries. These cave houses were inhabited until 1950, when the progressive geological degradation of the mass and continuous excavations to create new rooms — despite curtain walls — led to dangerous rockfalls in the troglodyte dwellings. At this stage, the community was evacuated to the modern part of Zelve, or Yeni Zelve. This forced exode thus interrupted a century-old custom, changing the whole way of life of the locals. In fact, it is clear how the particular condition of ancient apartment complexes influences the community's relationships.

AVANOS

The town of Avanos dates back to the Bronze Age, as can be seen from the burial tumulus of Toprakli. On the other hand, its terrain is watered by the 1355 kilometre-long, Kizilirmak River, the longest river in Turkey. This river was known to the Hittites as Marassantiya, while in the Classic Age it was known as Halys; its current name means "red river", due to the colour of its waters in this section of the river.

The very name of Avanos, which comes from the Latin "Venasa" refers to the banks of ferrous minerals which colour the silt, collected in quarries and refined in order to obtain the raw material for pottery. In fact, pottery is one of the main activities in the centre; in one of the town squares, a monument recalls various local activi-

The two main activities in Avanos, pottery and carpet-weaving, are commemorated in a likeable monument in the main square.

A display of terracotta pots and a potter moulding at his lathe.

ties such as vine-growing and weaving but especially pottery. Many streets are flanked by small potters' workshops where potters, seated in front of simple pedal lathes flanked by characteristic terracotta basins, make all kinds of pots. They are most famous for their glazed pottery, whose shiny red surface is decorated with vegetable and geometric designs.
Similar motifs appear on carpets, which, in Avanos as in other areas in the region, is a traditional activity. Carpets are not only produced in **workshops**, but countless women weave them at home, utilizing silk and wool patiently knotted on wooden looms. These products often appear on the streets of the town, flanked by old buildings in blocks of tufa and by houses with Muslim architecture, including a loggia terrace on the front.

Some pictures of the Cappadocia countryside.

Two other phases during the working of terracotta pots.

Four views of the road from Ürgüp to Zelve, with its characteristic tufa formations.

Along the road to Soğanli, one often comes across the rock pinnacles that housed hermits.

◄ *The village of Şahinefendi, on the road to the valley of Soğanli.*

VALLEY OF SOĞANLI

Cappadocia, with its plains and rocky areas, stretches extensively into Anatoli in the Göreme region. Its network, which often traces the path of ancient roads, touch on countless villages, distinguished by their simplicity, carts, donkeys and traders. There is no shortage of towns, with easily recognisable artistic and cultural stratifications in the historic centre, and caravanserais scattered here and there along the ancient roads.
One of the most surprising complexes in the region is **Derinkuyu**, a huge underground city. Brought back to light by using some of its areas as basements, it was already occupied in the Hittite and Roman eras, as can be seen from ruins and a marble eagle. Below the nineteenth century church are seven storeys of rooms, corridors, kitchens, a conference room cemeteries and churches which were hewn out in time until they covered, on communicating floors, an area of 4 square kilometres, capable of accommodating 20,000 inhabitants. Air shafts, consisting of vertical wells connected to water-tanks, are quite a feat.

Two pictures of the countryside in the Soğanli valley.

The flight of steps cut out of the tufa leading to the Tokali Kilise.

A typical pigeon-loft: white is used to attract the attention of the birds.

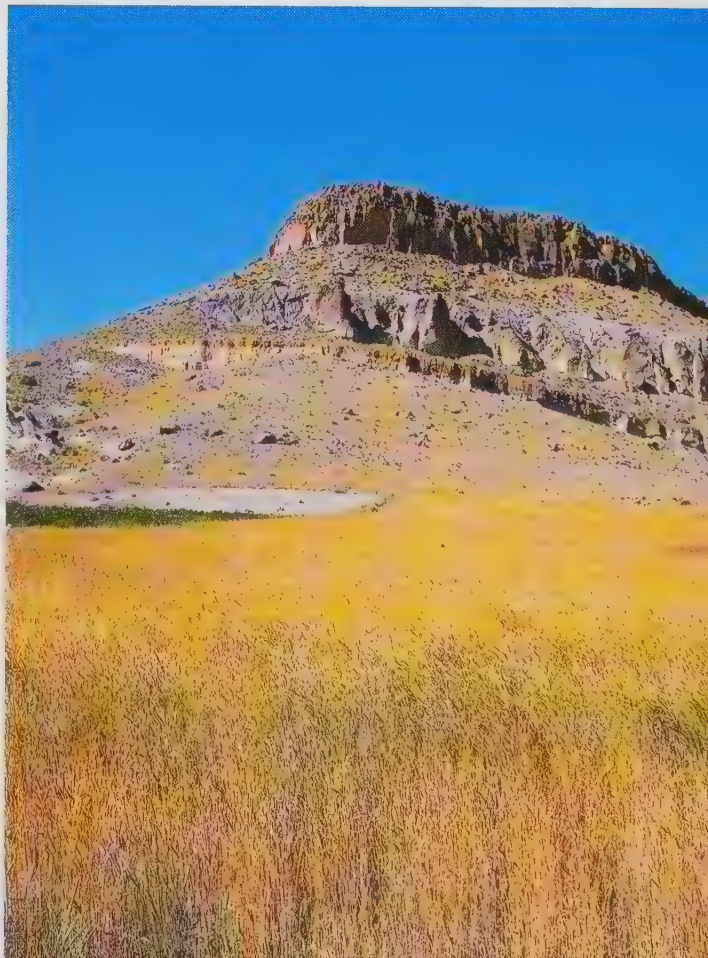
A complex of religious buildings dug into the tufa, smilar to the Open-Air Museum in Göreme, stands in **Soğanli**, 25 kilometres from Derinkuyu. In fact, near the village is an area of pigeon-lofts: in fact, pigeon-lofts were installed in churches which had been abandoned a long time beforehand. Their progressive emptying and restoration has enabled many Christian temples on the banks of the village steam to be brought back to their former glory. The churches, which probably date back to the IX century onwards, feature simple plans and ornate paintings in bright colours like blue, green, red and black on a beige background. Paintings follow the usual themes of Christ, Saints, religious symbols and animals, but certain panels also contain outlandish figures, perhaps connected to preexisting cults.
Among the numerous noteworthy churches is the "Church with the Beast", named after a wide animal next to St John in a fresco. Of the two rooms, one has an altar and wall burial niches, whereas the other interleading room is built according to a simple square plan. The marble architectural features, in a bad state of

The village of Soğanli and women with the handicrafts typical of this area: dolls in national costume and woollen gloves.

The warm shades of the countryside around Soğanli.

repair, on the outside are connected to unconventional frescoes in the interior, portraying naked women breast-feeding snakes. In fact, it is likely that the scene, painted at a later stage, refers to a more ancient, pagan cult. The **Kubbeli Kilise**, or Church with a dome, in fact, consists of two churches on different storeys. Rather inaccessible, it leads to a vast rectangular room on the bottom storey to which access is gained from a short, wide vestibule. The interior of the area of worship, which is reached through three portals, has pews and is divided into three naves by two rows of pillars and pilaster strips; the side naves, like the central one, lead to two curved apsidioles with altars.

However, the top florey has a far more complex plan consisting of two long, parallel, interleading rooms, each of which has a narthex. The right-hand chapel has a small apse with an altar and a narthex with a dome; the other chapel has its altar against the bottom wall and a square narthex, which overlooks not only its church but the one nextdoor, a vestibule and an inside room.



Exterior and interiors of the Karabaş Kilise, or Church with the Black Heads, thus named because time has blackened the heads and halos of the figures. These paintings go back to the XI century.

In fact the **St Barbara Church** also comprises two adjacent churches. Despite its bad state of repair and damage to the paintings, it can be deduced that the two parallel rooms were virtually the same but with different proportions. Through a corridor, one reached the rectangular chapel, divided into two by lesche on the walls; the walls featured a recurring pew and, sometimes, burial niches. A wall at the bottom divided the church itself from the apse, which was rather wide and had an altar at the bottom. In the remains of the frescoes, the figure of a saint has been roughly indicated as St Barbara, thus giving the complex its name.

The **Karabaş Kilise** or Church with the Black Heads owes its name to the images of the saints whose faces have been blackened by deterioration and oxidation. Crumbling in parts, it consists of several interleading rooms each with its own altar (except for the one in the middle). Of the four rooms, starting from the north, the first is a large barrel-vaulted room with an elyptical apse at the bottom. The three niches on the left wall imitate the real openings which, to the right, lead to the second chapel, with a similar structure but on a reduced scale, placed on a slight higher level. From here a stairway leads to a third flat-roofed room, whose bottom wall opens out into an arch leading to an altarless apse. Connected externally through an asymmetric vestibule, this room leads into the last chapel, which is narrow, flat-roofed and equipped with two niches containing pews along the side walls and an apsidiole at the bottom.

The area of Soğanli includes the Churches of the Virgin —, or Large Church -, the Geyikli Kilise, the Gök Kilise and the Tokali Kilise.

On these pages, some, pictures of Kaymakli, the large city dug underground between the VI and X centuries. The enormous wheel which served as a pivot and blocked the entrance to the tunnel is still there.

KAYMAKLI

The present town of Kaymakli, a few kilometres south of Nevşehir, differs from the ancient town; in fact, the original Kaymakli was a huge underground city, concealed inside a hill. It simple lines and continuous reutilization have made it impossible to technically judge the date of foundation; some pages of Senofonte's Anabasis seem to refer to the village. If the underground city with entrances similar to wells, in which men descended with ladders and animals through tunnels, was in fact Kaymakli, one could quite rightly say that the town has been inhabited since the V century B.C. The troglodyte colony that used to live there must have progressively increased in number; in fact, the disorderly layout of the rooms reflects a sudden need for new spaces, which was met by striking the less hard tufa veins with a pick-axe, traces of which can still be seen. The complex comprises several floors, sometimes connected by steep air shafts terminating in cisterns; corridors converged with compulsory passages, which isolated the various floors in the event of raids. These entrances were closed by an ingenious blocking system: an enormous stone wheel, similar to a grindstone, was usually kept in a niche, from where it could easily be rolled towards the passage, isolating it completely. A central hole in the stone wheel enabled it to be removed with a pivot and its prop allowed the troglodytes to shore up the door.

The living quarters such as rooms, kitchens, pantries and salt deposits are connected by a grid of flat-roofed corridors with barrel vaults; certain groups of rooms look onto a vestibule. The facility with which the soft stone was worked induced them to carve out of the rock furniture which they would otherwise have extraced from wood: cupboards, tables, beds and shelves. There is no shortage of areas set aside for worship: Christian chapels were built according to simple quadrangular plans with vaulted apsidioles, pews and altars. Lighting of the lower storeys was obtained with torches and lanterns, as can be seen from the blackening of some of the ceilings and certain wall niches. Nowadays the underground village is equipped with electric lighting facilitating tours. The walls showing signs of geological deterioration have been restored and the vertical passages in the corridors have been closed with grids for visitors' safety. One of the inner halls has been fitted out with simple furniture and household objects reminiscent of those used by the ancient inhabitants, making it easier to visualize how it looked before.

View of Nevşehir, dominated by the citadel of the Seljuk period.

NEVŞEHIR

Nowadays Nevşehir, capital of a large area, looks like one of the typical modern towns in Anatolia. The site on which it now stands, over one thousand metres high, was occupied in ancient times: traces of the Neolithic Age have been documented through the tumulus of Iğdeli Çeşme and other obsidian finds. The town was probably refounded during the Hittite era because it is near to Kizilirmak. Having become an important town, it was occupied by Aegeans towards the XII century B.C. and by Cimmerians towards the VIII century B.C., passing under the Assyrians between 680 and 610 B.C., then under the Medes until 550 and under the Persians until 332 B.C. After the Hellenic age, Nevşehir was occupied by the Romans from 17 A.D., who then left it to Byzantium from 395; having then passed under various dominions (of the Ilhanlilars, the Eretnas and the Karamangullaris), it was annexed to the Ottoman Empire in 1446.

Very little evidence remains of its past rulers: the fortress, which overlooks the modern town, dates back to the Byzantine era. The Seljuk and Ottoman restorations made it into a pentagonal fortres with four cylindrical towers and two entrances; the wall, which partly skirts the rocky crags, is crenellated.

Lower down is a large Islamic religious complex: the mosque of Ibrahim Paşa, also known as the Mosque with the Leads on account of the lead tiles on the roof. Damat Ibrahim Paşa was the local Grand Vizier at the beginning of the eighth century who commissioned the mosque with its outbuildings, which were completed eight years later. The architect who designed it was inspired by mosques in the capital, placing near the entrance a garden with a foutain covered by a dome on columns that precedes the domed portico. The interior with spectacular decorated vaults features a precious enamelled altar with a passage from the Koran.

The local benefactor of this mosque has been commemorated with a recently built statue in the central square behind the religious complex. It portrays Damat Ibrahim Paşa in his Vizier's uniform and high headdress. He also had part of the hostel, which now serves as the local museum, built. The rooms, inaugurated in 1967, house a series of documents on local history, including hand-written, miniated codes; the archaeological section — with its crockery, weapons, clothes and everyday utensils — and the ethmographical section — exhibiting local traditional arts and crafts — are of particular interest.

THE VALLEY OF IHLARA

The countryside in the valley of Ihlara is different from the rest of Cappadocia: in fact, a river-bed has opened a deep canyon in the rocky tableland; only in the bottom of this steep valley does vegetation manage to grow.
The Melendiz, now a rivulet, used to be a large river rising on the slopes of the Hasan Dağ, an extinct volcano. The river-bed meanders as far as Salt Lake, called Tuz Gölü. Apart from Ihlara, the valley contains other villages, including Yaprak Hisar, with its fairy chimneys, and Selime, known for its church with three naves divided by columns. The side naves features barrel vaults whereas of the three apses the central one is covered by a dome. The walls were originally covered by Bizantine frescoes in yellow and black, which were then concealed by paintings of various *Saints* and *Scenes from the life of Christ*. The village is also famous for the mausoleum of Selime, the sultan after whom the village is named. Another highlight of the valley are the remains of Roman baths, placed near the stream to ensure a valid water supply.
The valley of Ihlara has another entire complex of churches in a steep, picturesque valley. Dating back as far as the IV century, their IX century frescoes are inspired by Syrian art which was simpler and made use of only a few colours (various shades of red on a white background).
As from the XI century, more colours were used and the Syrian-Egyptian style was influenced by Byzantine art and religious mosaics of major churches at the time.

The green valley of Ihlara.

Two picturesque views of the village of Leileik.

Frontal, schematic figures were juxtaposed between vegetal designs, albeit abstract or architectural. Especially in the abstract motifs (but also in the thick lines outlining figures) the influence of mosaics is plainly visible, and the series of frescoes make the same impact on one as mosaics in a Byzantine church. Note that the layout of certain figures often follows a fixed pattern: in fact, Christ is generally placed — behind an almond tree — on the vault of the main apse; angels below separate him from the Virgin Mary who, in the centre of the niche, is flanked by Evangelists and other Saints.
Starting from the south, after the Kuze Ambar Kilise, we encounter the **Kokar Kilise**; literally translated, it means the church that smells. Dating back to the IX century, it is distinguished by its light green on grey frescoes and burial chambers. Having passed the Parenli Seki Kilise, one comes across the Ağaç Alti Kilise, or the church under the trees; in fact, the valley is dotted with high-trunk trees whose growth is encouraged by the stream and milder climate. The Ağaç Alti Kilise is built on a cross plan with a central vault; its frescoe are in red, green, brown and orange on a brown and blue background and portray the *Ascension* (on the vault) and a series of *Scenes from the life of Mary* — named here "queen of the angels", including the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity*, the *Arrival of the Wise Men*, the *Flight into Egypt* and the *Death of the Virgin Mary*.
Nearby stands the **Sümbüllü Kilise**, or church of the hyacinths, whose façade is embellished with arched niches. More than a simple church, in actual fact it is

a multi-storeyed monastery with large pantries. Built in the IX century, it features frescoes with *Saints* and *Scenes from the life of Christ* below a large *Ascension*; the place was probably occupied by Christians also in the Seljuk era, as can be seen from the image of King Mesut II, who allowed freedom of worship.
On the opposite side, near the Karanlik Kaya Kilise or Dark Church stands the Yilanli Kilise or Church with Snakes, named after the fresco with snakes attacking four sinners. Other paintings of the cross-shaped church portray rare interesting scenes, such as the *Last Judgement*, *Hell*, *Paradise*, the *Burial of Mary* and various *Martyrs*.
The ridge continues in a north-west direction with the Kaya Alti Kilise, heading towards Belisirma.
Another noteworthy church is the **Eğritas Kilise**, used as a funeral chapel, whereas the lower storey contains

Dwellings out of the rock and tufa pinnacles in Selime.

To the right and on the following pages: aspects of the countryside towards the valley of Ihlara.

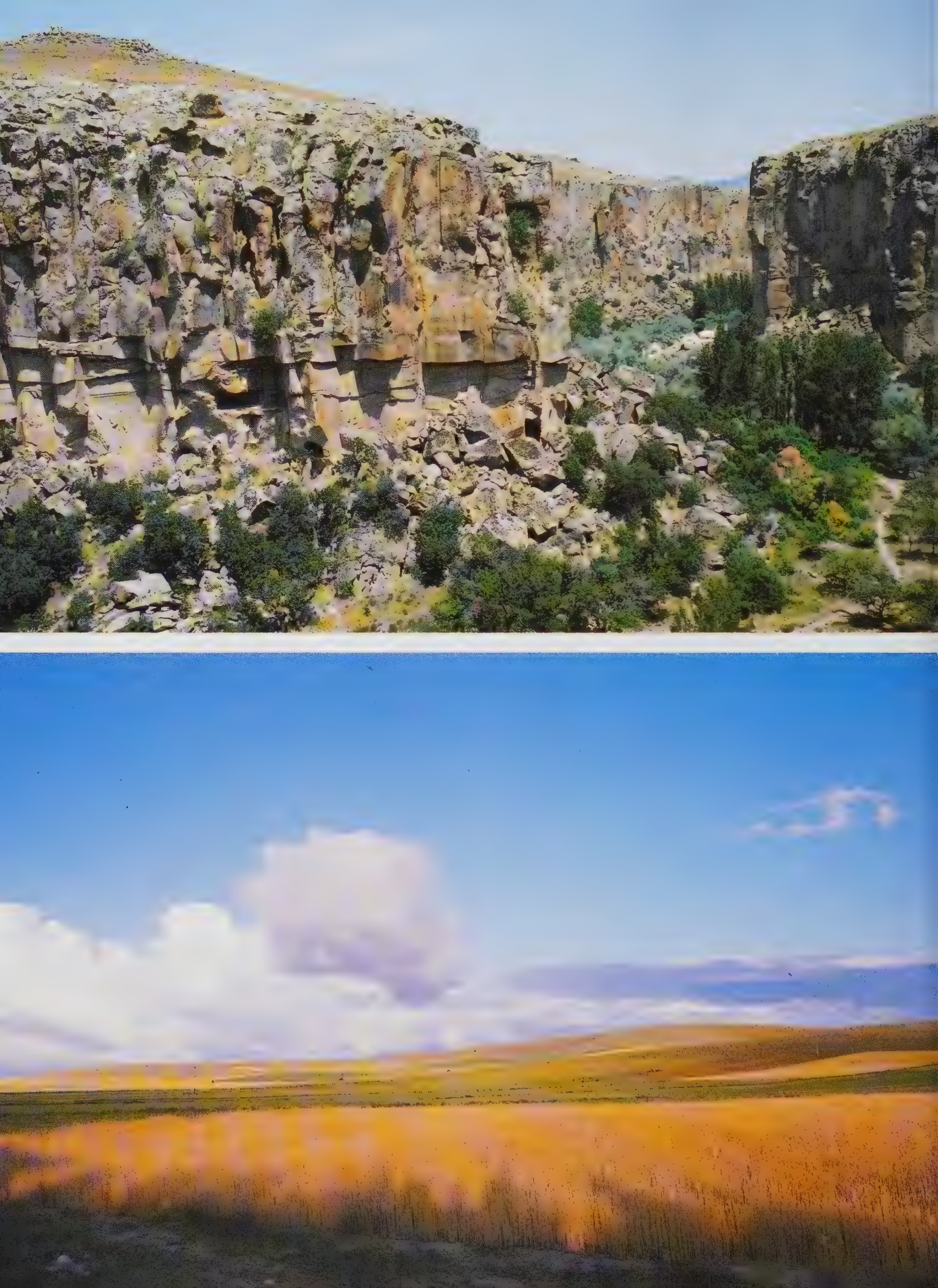
The bed of the Melendiz has hollowed out the deep canyon forming the valley of Ihlara.

burial chambers, decorated by holy inscriptions and symbols.

Frescoes portray scenes from the *Life of Christ and Mary*. Near the village of Belisirma stands the cross-shaped Ala Kilise, with its crumbling domes. What remains of the frescoes on the arches has enabled art historians to date the ornamentation back to the XI century and to distinguish two different artists, including one who was particularly close to the Byzantine School.

A stone's throw away is the **Bakattin Samakiliği Kilise**, whose vaulted, single-columned interior is decorated with valuable frescoes. In fact, the artist has created panels with scenes from the *Life of Mary*, in which the figures move, overlap and interrelate, as in the *Mary Visiting Elizabeth*.

Another church of interest in the neighbourhood is the **Kirk Damalti Kilise**, also known as the St George's Church. More than for its plan and preservation of its frescoes, the church is known for its documentation on Turkish tolerance towards Christianity in the Seljuk Age; in fact, the XIII century paintings reveal the intervention of Turkish master artists. Episodes from the *Life of St George* include the offer of a gift to the Saint by Commander Amirazes Basileos and a woman as a sign of respect for Christian saints on the part of the Turks. Amirazes was, in fact, commander-in-chief of the troups of the Seljuk King Mesut II; he is depicted on the walls not far from the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos. On the opposite side of Melendiz is the cross-shaped **Direkli Kilise**, whose central dome supported by four columns and walls are decorated with frescoes, probably dating back to the XI-XII centuries and portraying *Saints*, the *Pantocrator*, the *Archangels Gabriel and Michael* and interspersed geometric designs.



Two pictures of the Ağzikarahan Caravanserai.

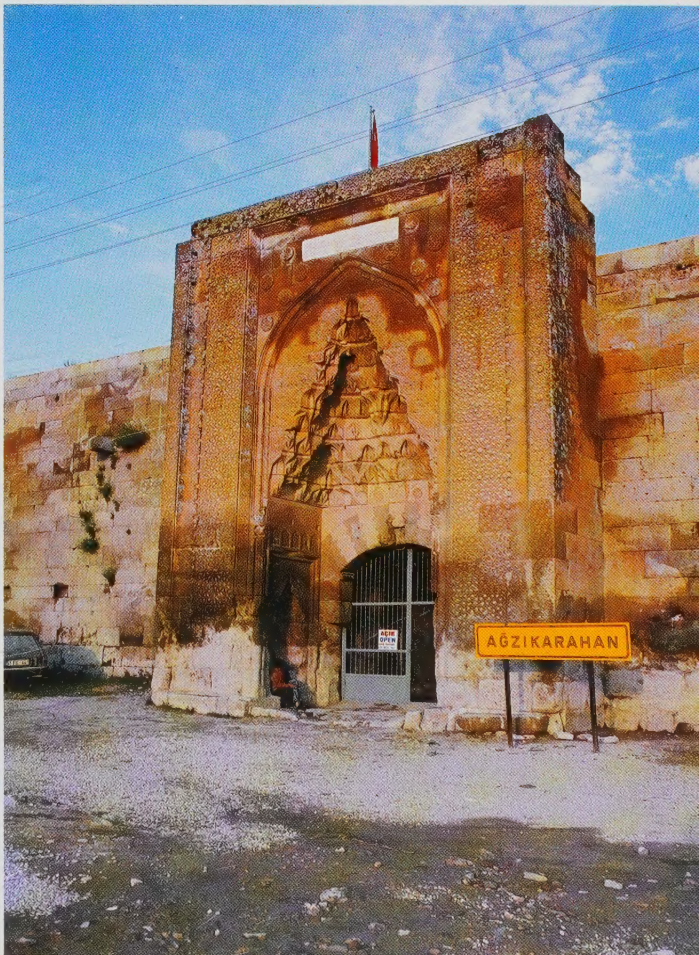
◄ The rock-face rising steeply over the Melendiz River.

◄ An endless field of wheat on the Anatolian tableland.

AĞZIKARAHAN

The Ağzikarahan Caravanserai is one of the best preserved in the Aksaray area. It was built during the Seljuk period between 1231 and 1237 along one of the main roads of the Turkish Empire. From the outside, it looks like a walled fort, built with blocks of local stone and featuring three or five-side towers. The main entrance is framed by a majestic portal, the front of which is completely covered in finely engraved Arabesques. Below an ogival vault, a sort of semi-dome decorated with countless niches stands in front of the real entrance door with its barrel vault. The inside of the sumptuous portal is similar to the outside, with decorations underneath the ogival arch.

In the centre of the courtyard stands a massive square-shaped construction, opened at the bottom by double pointed arches: the mosque for travellers and servants. In fact, the courtyard is surrounded by other arches and rooms, used as apartments, bath-rooms and dining-rooms; the bottom opens out into a large, ornate portal leading to the main room of the complex. In this and other caravanserais, hospitality was given to travellers, according to a custom diffused throughout the Seljuk Turkish Empire.



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